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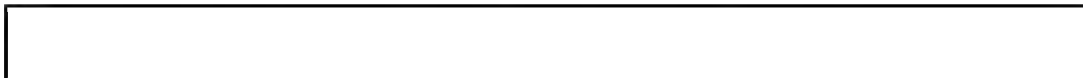
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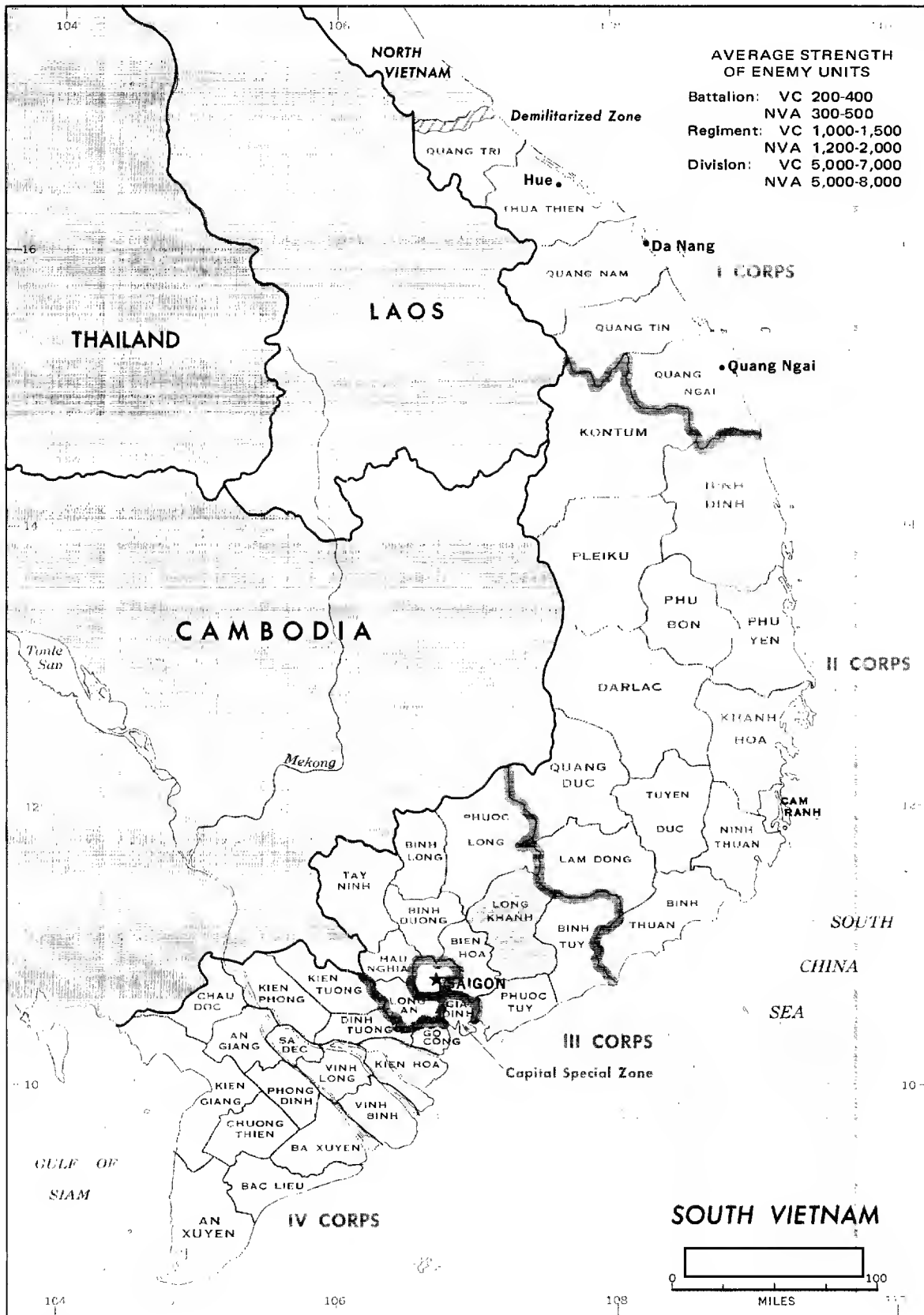
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South Vietnam: Communist military activity was at a relatively moderate level throughout South Vietnam on 25 March.

Sharp ground fighting was limited for the most part to an area northeast of Saigon in Long Khanh Province, where an allied Special Forces unit suffered fairly heavy casualties when it was attacked by elements of the Viet Cong 5th Division. Smaller ground clashes also occurred in the southern portion of Tay Ninh Province and at several points near Quang Ngai city.

Except for two terrorist raids in Saigon--which killed a national policeman and a civilian and injured some 22 civilian bystanders--the capital was generally free of enemy action on 25 March, as were the major northern cities of Hue and Da Nang.

* * * *

As a result of the Thich Thien Minh affair, the rival militant and moderate Buddhist factions in South Vietnam have taken tentative steps toward renewing their contacts, which have been broken since 1966. The moderates' leader is reported to have proposed that now might be the time for both wings to resolve many of their differences over social and religious affairs. The militants reportedly were receptive to the proposal; they probably hope that an agreement between the two would strengthen them in their current quarrel with the government. Moderate leaders, however, are said to be still opposed to any political activity on the part of Buddhist monks.

[REDACTED]

(Map)]

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[Pakistan: National affairs are in a state of suspension following President Ayub's resignation yesterday and the turning over of authority to army chief Yahya Khan.

The country is now under martial law, the constitution having been abrogated, the national and provincial assemblies dissolved, and important government officials deposed. Yahya, in his new capacity as chief military commander and administrator of the country, has already issued a series of regulations and will probably outline his plans for martial law administration during his scheduled nationwide broadcast this morning.

Yahya was accorded the top position because he heads the largest of the armed services. He is apparently a man of some military ability but is not an outstanding leader or one who commands wide respect.

Whether Yahya Khan and the military establishment can succeed where Ayub failed remains to be seen, particularly because they, too, are mostly West Pakistanis. They should have little trouble handling the residual unrest in West Pakistan, but their task in the East, where the military symbolizes West Pakistan's long-time domination, will be more difficult. The military leaders have been reluctant to intervene in the civil disorder, and will probably have to meet the situation as it develops, responding as necessary to the actions of the aroused East Pakistani population.

At the moment, the resort to military rule appears to be intended as a stopgap measure to restore order and, if possible, permit the holding of national elections. Continuation of the chaos, however, might convince the military leaders that representative government is a luxury Pakistan cannot yet afford and that they must continue to rule the country themselves.

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Peru: The military government may decide to move soon against the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), Peru's only broadly based political party.

A major reason for the coup last October was the military's fear that its archenemy APRA leader Haya de la Torre, would win the presidential election then scheduled for 1969. The administration's pretext for acting now will reportedly be that APRA is encouraging students to oppose a new university law.

An APRA party leader said on 23 March that he had seen a draft of a decree law that would declare APRA an illegal organization and would exile the national executive committee. He assumed it would be promulgated in the near future. An independent source reports that the government is keeping a very close watch on APRA activities.

Outlawing APRA could cause discontent among labor elements that support the party, but no real danger to the government. Some moderate elements within the military have been looking to APRA for support should they decide to move against President Velasco.

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NOTES

Jordan: King Husayn has replaced Prime Minister Bahjat Talhuni with the more articulate and sophisticated Abd al-Munim Rifai. Husayn probably hopes the change will strengthen his government in the current Middle East negotiations. The remaining members of the new cabinet are all veteran performers on the Amman political scene and in most cases their selection seems to represent an effort to satisfy various elements within the country. [REDACTED]

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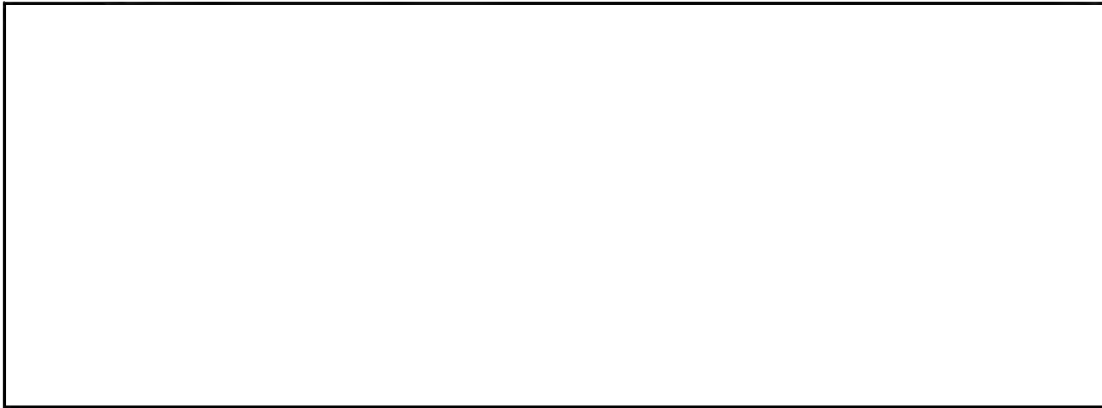
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Somali Republic: Elections for 123 seats in the National Assembly are being held today in the Somali Republic. The Somali Youth League, the largest of Somalia's political parties, is expected to maintain control of parliament as it has since independence in 1960. Prime Minister Mohamed Egal appears likely to be reappointed by President Scermarche to form a new government after the election. The formation of a new cabinet, which requires parliamentary confirmation, could take some time, however. [REDACTED]

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